

Samuel Cleage House  
Lee Highway, near U.S. 11 Business Route  
and U.S. 11 Bypass  
Athens vicinity  
McMinn County  
Tennessee

HABS No. TN-201

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54-ATH-V  
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C.

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# HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SAMUEL CLEAGE HOUSE

HABS No. TN-201

Location: Lee Highway, 0.2 miles south of intersection of U.S. 11 Business Route and U.S. 11 Bypass, near Athens, McMinn County, Tennessee.

Present Owner: Robert Asa Davis, Jr., Highland Street, Athens, Tennessee.

Present Use: Vacant.

Significance: The Samuel Cleage (Clegg) House, built c. 1826, is one of the best preserved high Federal style structures in this state. It is also one of the first brick structures built by white settlers in the newly ceded Hiwassee District. The house was designed and built by the notable Cleage and Crutchfield firm. The house is notable for its Flemish bond brick courses, Flemish gables, unique proportions, side hall plan, molded brick cornice, handsome interior detailing, and its original imposing dominance upon the landscape.

## Part I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: c. 1826.
2. Architect: Cleage and Crutchfield.

The firm was a well-known merchandising and construction business enterprise ran by Samuel Cleage and his son-in-law Thomas Crutchfield in the 19th century. Cleage was the senior partner of the firm. He was involved in the construction of the Federal buildings stretching from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania to Fincastle, Virginia, to East Tennessee. Crutchfield was responsible for many public and institutional buildings in East Tennessee, as well as some others elsewhere. Employees of the firm included the Cleage sons (David and Alexander), the Crutchfield sons (Thomas, Jr, and William), apprentices, journeymen and slave craftsmen. David Cleage continued to run the firm following his father's death, although he spent some time in banking and real estate. Alexander Cleage later took up a banking career, and with his brother David was instrumental in the establishment of the first banking developments in Athens. Crutchfield's sons later became prominent in the business and political history of Chattanooga. Family tradition of building arts continued in the younger members of the Cleage and Crutchfield families: Thomas Alexander Cleage, son of Alexander Cleage, became a noted contractor in the late 19th century, and William Crutchfield II, great grandson of Thomas Crutchfield, was a prominent Chattanooga architect in the recent decades of this century.

Samuel Cleage was born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, near Elizabeth township in 1781. He was the youngest of seven children born to Alexander and Susannah Marion Cleage. His father, Alexander, emigrated from a small village outside of Belfast (Ireland) and came to Pennsylvania. He was a contractor and builder, and he fought in the Revolutionary War against the British. About the year 1800, the Cleages moved to Botetourt County, Virginia, near the town of Buchanan. In May of the same year young Samuel, then 19, married Mary Stanback in Virginia. They had three children: Alexander, David, and Sarah Moore Cleage. Samuel died in 1850.

Sarah Moore Cleage, Samuel's daughter, was married in April 1820 in Botetourt County, Virginia, to Thomas Crutchfield. Crutchfield was a descendant of English ancestry who had come to Virginia as early as 1680. He was the son of Robert and Mary Nickols Crutchfield. He and Sarah had four children: Mary Jane, William, Samuel, and Thomas Jr. Thomas died in 1850, which was also the year of the death of his father-in-law.

3. Original and subsequent owners: The Cleage home is built upon several tracts of land entered by Samuel Cleage in 1825, lying within the northeast quarter of section 9, the southwest quarter of section 15, and the northwest quarter of section 10 of the 4th township, in the 1st range west of the meridian of the old 4th Civil District and new 1st Civil District of McMinn County, Tennessee. Entry numbers 1212 consisting of 160 acres was applied for May 7, 1825, and numbers 1913 of 107 acres and 1914 of 159 acres were entered November 9, 1825. (Grant Book B, p.229, 230).

After Samuel's death in 1850 the property was divided among the sons, and David received the "Brick house" property. After David's death the property fell to his heirs.

Samuel R. Cleage to Harvey Gates: 1125 acres for \$7,750 - June 7, 1893 - Deed Book DD p. 333-336. (see also Deed Book HH p. 72-74).

Harvey Gates to John B. Haley: 375 acres for \$5,000 - March 10, 1898 - Deed Book II p. 170-171.

John B. Haley to B.M. Johnson: 315 acres "...the tract of land where we now live and known as the old David Cleage farm..." for \$4,410 - March 18, 1905 - Deed Book 00 p. 284-5.

B.M. Johnson to J.L. and E.M. Mitchell: 315 acres for \$13,000 - Deed Book VV p. 221-222. (date not given).

J.L. and E.M. Mitchell to T.B. Guthrie, Trustee: 662 acres for \$58,000 - April 10, 1920 - Deed Book 3G p. 431-433.

T.B. Guthrie, Trustee to T.B. Guthrie, et al: 635 acres for \$50,000 - October 29, 1923 - Deed Book 3J p. 104

T.B. Guthrie, et al to Clem J. Jones: 191 acres for \$8,583.37 - June 11, 1936 - Deed Book 3T p. 528-529.

Clem J. Jones to Robert A. Davis: Will Book I p. 332-333 (date not given).

Robert A. Davis to Maude E. Davis: Will probated April 14, 1950 - Will Book J. p. 195

M.E. Davis to Robert Asa Davis, Jr.: April 1, 1967 - Deed Book p.543

4. Builders, contractors, suppliers: Cleage manufactured most of his own materials. He employed his sons as apprentices and journeymen as well as others including several slaves as workmen. It is likely that these slaves developed buildings skills of their own that were important to local building history. The following appeared in an article taken from family oral tradition:

"The slaves were taught to mix the clay and sand for bricks, mold them in wooden molds, stack and burn them, and lay them with a carefully mixed mortar. They were taught to make plaster of sand and lime. The lime had to be made by taking new limestone and burning it, after which it was kept for months before using. It was then mixed with sand, and coarse hairs were used in the first coat."

"Many buildings were framed, and the workmen were taught how to make mortise and tenon joints instead of nailed ones."

In Recollections of Old Athens the writer tells that "Samuel Cleage required his workmen to put eighteen coats of paint on every bit of wood."

The design and proportion are similiar to those of Asher Benjamin's townhouses (1827 edition).

5. Original plans and construction: Much of the building retains its original character. Besides the extant Flemish gables, Flemish bond, mortise and tenon joints, townhouse proportion, interior detail, fan window, solid brick side (north) wall, plastered lintels, tin roof, were its 12/12 facade sashes with probable 6/9 rear sashes and small 6-pane, second story ell casement sash. Its original stoop was of wood as shown in several pictures reported to have been taken in the 1920's but seemingly earlier.

6. Alterations and additions: Some interior alterations were made in the 1890's including replacement of 12/12 window sashes with 2/2 sashes. In the ell new floors were laid and wainscoting added. The exterior brick has been repainted. In 1967 the ell porch was enclosed and a bathroom added. In recent years the kitchen floor has been repaired. Otherwise the building retains its original details and fabric. Expansion of the county road to a major highway has caused a major encroachment upon the property since the early 1960's, the right of way being only a few feet from the house. Brick stoops on front and rear doors have been added recently.

## Part II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The Samuel Cleage House, one of the important early permanent buildings built in frontier Tennessee, is a well-proportioned, brick-and-frame structure with interesting Federal details. The building consists of a 2-story main block and 1 1/2-story ell which form a L-shape. Dimensions of the entire house are 32' - 2" (3 bays) x 56' - 4" (6 bays). There is also a 1-story, 2' x 4' frame addition built in 1967. Brick walls serve as bearing loads, and the main roof has a sawed timber truss with its ridge parallel to the front facade.

The brick wall of the front facade (northwest elevation) is laid in Flemish bond. The side and rear walls are laid in running bond. There are unique stepped Flemish gables in the main block and in the back of the ell. The main doorway is slightly set back from the brick stoop (not original), and has paneled wood jambs. It has a wide opening and a 4-panel door which is probably original. On its top are a 7-pane Federal fanlight, a reeded soffit, and a wide stuccoed lintel. All first floor windows, including those in the ell, have stuccoed segmental brick arches, and all first and second floor windows (except small casement windows in the second floor of the ell) have sills. There are also rectangular basement windows in the entire building. The molded brick cornice is found in the front facade and in the ell. There are also two tall brick chimneys; one is located on the southwest wall of the main block, and the other occupies a near-center position in the ell, serving the kitchen, dining room, and bedroom fireplaces.

Except for a portion of the northeast section of the ell, all floor plans are similar in arrangement, with the main stairway positioned in the side entry hall (see HABS measured drawings for a visual observation of the plans). Interior trim includes molded baseboards, chairrailings, picture moldings, (probably a later addition) and simple molded door and window architraves. The main stairway, located in the east corner wall of the side hall, is a 2-flight open well, open string type, with simple scrollwork, simple balusters and tapering turned newels. This stairway provides access to the basement as well as access to the upper floors. There is also a simple wood stairway in the southwest corner of the ell, providing access to the second floor only. Doors are 6-panel. The dining room mantel measures approximately five feet

high. It has a Federal design consisting of pilasters, a center block, and a "stepped" mantel shelf. (One of the other mantels, located in the parlor, has been stripped off).

### Part III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early Views: Early photographs in the possession of Mrs. Penelope Johnson Allen, Chattanooga, Tennessee, great, great granddaughter of Samuel Cleage and noted historian. All of these photographs were reportedly taken in the 1920's although a few seem somewhat earlier. They are important for illustrating the prominence of the building upon the landscape. All photos are either of the south or northwest (facade) elevation and illustrate some earlier characteristics now extinct. Cedars line the drive; shutters border all windows; there was an outside entrance to the basement; the front stoop was wood; and the smoke house was still extant.

B. Interviews and Contributors:

Mrs. Penelope Johnson Allen, Chattanooga, Tennessee - great, great granddaughter of Samuel Cleage and noted historian.

Mrs. Alice W. Milton, Chattanooga, Tennessee - research and assistance.

Miss Susie Williams, Athens, Tennessee - research and assistance.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

a. County Records

McMinn County Deed Books

McMinn County Chancery Court Records

McMinn County Census Records, 1830-50

b. Pamphlets and Papers

"Recollections and Hearsays of Athens Fifty Years and Beyond" by J.M. Sharp - Athens, Tennessee, 1933 - a collection of oral traditions of Athens - to be closely scrutinized.

"Cleage and Crutchfield - Early Tennessee Builders" - an unpublished paper written by Joseph L. Herndon, Bruceton, Tennessee, July 1973.

2. Secondary and published sources:

a. Newspapers:

The Anniston Star, October 31, 1972 - Anniston, Alabama  
"Jacksonville, The Beginning," by John Ronner

The Chattanooga Times - Chattanooga, Tennessee, January 21,  
1934 - "Leaves From the Family Tree...Cleage" by Penelope  
Johnson Allen

April 10, 1941 - "Kill Devil", by Elizabeth R. Buchholtz  
(taken from family oral tradition from William Crutchfield II,  
architect)-----, 1943 "Looking Backward" (name of newspaper  
not noted)

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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in cooperation with the Tennessee Historical Commission and the East Tennessee Historical Society. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed during the summer of 1974, at the HABS field office, School of Architecture, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, by Michael A. Tomlan (Columbia University), Project Supervisor; Joseph L. Herndon (Columbia University), Project Historian; William W. Howell (University of Tennessee); Thomas Gordon Smith (University of California at Berkeley), Architects; and student assistant architect Marc Stewart Levoy (Cornell University).

Susan McCown, HABS staff historian in the Washington, D.C. office, prepared the written data in Winter 1986, for transmittal to the Library of Congress. Jack E. Boucher, HABS staff photographer, took the photos of the house in February 1983.